

## **STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL WILLIAM A. OWENS, USN (RET)**

My testimony today will argue that we must have significant and focused reform in the Department of Defense to allow us to address the pressing funding and structural problems which the new administration and this Congress face in preserving our national security. I believe there is not a need for large funding increases. There is a need for increased funding for C4ISR systems at the expense of highly expensive and advanced platforms (good enough new platforms are good enough!) and infrastructure. There is a need for increased “jointness” and systematic consolidation to realize very large savings. Importantly we must realize the promise of America’s commercial technology and apply it to our military forces. All of this will require a change in culture and a determined leadership.

There is profound information technology available in America. This technology would allow our Country the capability for the first time in history of man, to be able to “see” a very large strategic battlefield with great definition. That means that 24 hours a day, in real-time, all weather, we could have the ability in a “strategic” battlefield, the size of a country 250 miles on a side, to see every activity and facility which might be of interest to our warfighting, peacemaking or peacekeeping effort. Every command center, every vehicle moving down a road or in a battlefield, every radar and radio, and every critical facility could be identified and located to great accuracy, probably about 10 cm. And what is important is that if we are able to view a strategic battlefield this way and prevent an enemy from doing so, we have dominant battlefield awareness, and we are certain to prevail in a conflict. It matters less we have large numbers of submarines or aircraft, warships or tanks, many of which tend to be “targets”. It matters much more that we possess the basic information and systems to allow us to provide this information and relay the knowledge to our soldiers, sailors and airmen in the battlefield.

This capability rests on technology, in which space-based observation and remote sensing, automated target recognition, automated data correlation, and broadband, secure communications play important roles. But it also depends on agile military organizations and structures that are able to take advantage of the technology. They must be able to respond rapidly to what the knowledge reveals.

The Defense Department has recognized this for nearly a decade. There is formal agreement to transform the US military, an agreement manifest in documents such as the Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to the President and Congress since 1998 and the Joint Chiefs of Staffs Chairman’s Joint Vision 2010, published in 1997. And we have been slowly moving in the right direction.

Yet, the revolution in military affairs remains controversial within the Department of Defense, and there is some evidence that we have not gone fast enough. Kosovo was a benchmark. Although we were Victorious in Kosovo, we also experienced problems that need fixing. Our Army was not agile enough. Our Air Force and Navy needed more precision munitions. And because of barriers that remained between the services - a lack of jointness, in particular - we were not able to use our ample intelligence to adequately affect events on the ground. The fact is: technology is changing warfare

and our forces are not adapting quickly enough. Our current forces, and the procedures that govern their design and structures are still largely products of Cold War planning. The US military is still a long way from ready to deal with the battlefields of the future, and the future is coming quickly.

This is the central planning issue within the US Department of Defense. The real debate inside the Pentagon is on two issues. How fast the military ought to change and how best to experiment to define the changes needed.

These are important issues. Broad, extensive experimentation with organizing and doing things differently reduces the readiness of the military to do things as they have been done previously. Increasing the agility of forces (so that they can, in fact, operate within the decision cycle of an opponent) implies different weapons mixes, different command structures, and different procedures. Tapping into the leading edge of information technology suggests a different acquisition system, for information technology is largely a product of the commercial world, not the defense-contractor world that gives us the best tanks, ships, and airplanes money can buy. Combining the contributions of each of the military services into more synergistic outputs necessarily means reducing the independence of each of the military services in defining its requirements. Once you start peeling back the issue of how fast we should transform the US military, it's easier to understand why the transformation seems to lag. The American revolution in military affairs challenges convention, culture, and the power structure in our military establishment.

Much of the technology needed to consummate the American revolution in military affairs is in hand. But the organizational adjustments, structural changes, and new operational concepts needed to take full advantage of the technology lag. Recognizing the delay, the Congress, led by Senators Coates and Lieberman, charged what is now the Joint Forces Command to begin joint experimentation to catch up with the technology. It was an important step, but a very small one compared to what should be done. The funding for the first year of the effort was less than that allocated to distribute Viagra to military personnel. Experimentation remains almost exclusively the purview of the individual military services whose bias favors honing their independent specialties, not improving joint operational effectiveness or accelerating the transformation of their current organizations and structures.

At a minimum, we ought to increase the funding and authority of the Joint Forces Command for joint experimentation. But we should do more. We should consider the establishment of standing joint task forces at three star levels throughout the operational command structure rotating the commands among the different services. The three star level is the war fighting level. Establishing standing joint task forces at this level would provide a broad operating base for the forces to work out the myriad details needed to meld new technology to new organizations, structures, operations, and joint cultures.

Information technology allows the United States to step away from the tenets of attrition warfare, with its emphasis on overwhelming mass, e.g. large numbers of ships, tanks, aircraft, and troops. It argues that the United States could have the kind of military force that could quickly seize the initiative in all kinds of armed conflicts. It postulates similar leaps in the ability to meet the demands that today are so prominent—in the ability to understand and react effectively to rapidly changing, complex, and dangerous situations in those fuzzy areas that we call peacemaking, peacekeeping,

assurance, and deterrence.

There is an unfortunate and growing, discrepancy between the increasing power of American information technology and the cultural-institutional character of America's defense establishment. We have crossed an important threshold in the revolution in military affairs. The significant barriers to consummating its revolutionary promise are no longer technical. They are institutional and bureaucratic. And as in all revolutions, this one entails more than technological change. It involves altering the structure of our forces, for if we are to move to a military that has the agility to take full advantage of dominant battlespace knowledge, we must shed mass for mobility and speed. This involves institutional change, for if we are to integrate our technical capacities, we must make joint (e.g.: multi-service) and combined (e.g. multi-national) operations natural. And this involves political-military changes, for if we are to accelerate the needed institutional and structural changes, we must ensure strong civilian control of the military and reduce armed service parochialism in force planning.

We have too much functional redundancy across our military services and agencies, particularly in support and force enhancers like intelligence, medical, logistics, and communications, and perhaps in combat areas such as air defense and long range strike. In the past, redundancy was compelling because the "fog of war" demanded it to compensate for the unexpected. Today, as a nation's information edge becomes more prominent, the extent to which we need the same level of redundancy is questionable.

Redundancy stems largely from armed service parochialism—the desire to remain self-sufficient because of fear that interdependency will reduce the service's relative institutional status. Unfortunately, in the US, service parochialism has far more influence on force planning than it should. Episodic efforts to balance it with a stronger joint perspective—from the McNamara reforms of the 1960s, through the Goldwater-Nichols Act in the mid-1980s, to the resurrection of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council in the mid-1990s—did not break the crystalline stovepipes that channel service planning. Nor have they succeeded in changing the basic planning assumption of each military service; namely, that they are engaged in a zero sum game among the other military services. And the perseverance of service centric planning and operations cuts into our ability to integrate advanced information technology into planning and operations. It is not that, individually, the military services oppose advances in information technology. Indeed, they all have modernization programs underway that do it. Yet, overall, the integration occurs in an uncoordinated manner, in fits and starts, and is delayed by traditional service commitments to the aircraft, tanks, and ships that, in the late industrial age, once defined military prowess. And, in the process, the American military paradox grows. The US edge in military information technology is admired, feared and envied. But the US has been unable to leverage that edge into the much more effective, less expensive, superior military capability called for by this new era.

It is important that the military services' natural parochialism be balanced by the national perspectives our governmental system lodges with elected and appointed officials. Certainly, military professionals ought to play important roles in setting military requirements for the future. But their perception of what the nation needs in its military comes with considerable caution regarding change and a profound degree of service parochialism regarding national military requirements. We need to leaven that perspective with one that is less the sum of service views, more

focused on seeking higher military output through synergy across the military services, and more willing to make cross-service trade-offs. One way to achieve this is through a Defense Requirements Council reporting to the Secretary of Defense. This Council should be sufficiently funded with an analysis capability and chaired by a senior civilian, perhaps the Deputy Secretary, and with either Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a vice chair. The military services would be represented on this council by a four star officer, but the recommendations of the council would be made by its chairman and would not require agreement or consensus by the council members.

These would be significant changes and could not be made overnight. They would result in shifts of resources within the Defense Department, marked, among other things, by increased funding for information technology and the research and development that supports it. They would almost certainly accelerate some of the organizational changes peeping out from current planning. The “tail” would decrease and the fighting forces would increase. Force structure and organization would evolve more quickly than the Pentagon currently contemplates. We could keep, or even increase, the number of Army divisions, air wings, and naval battlegroups we have today, although these might look quite different and have fewer personnel than today. They would, however, be more potent, effective, and useable, and they would operate jointly. All this will not come automatically nor easily. Significant changes never do.

And this change will take strong civilian leadership, great creativity, considerable political courage, and innovation. It will be met by strong objection from legacy organizations including the military, defense contractors, and congressional constituencies. It will also turn out to also be the stuff from which powerful political leaders of the future will develop into legends.